



Workshop on
**Advocacy and Inter-regional Cooperation for Information & Communication
Technologies/Management in Agricultural Research for Development**

Organized by
Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) – Extension, Thailand
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Proceedings



Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
39 Maliwan Mansion, Phra Atit Road, Bangkok, Thailand

Introduction

Under its Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS) initiative, APAARI proposed to GFAR to host the third inter-regional workshop on Information & Communication Management for Agricultural Research for Development (ICM4ARD) in the Asia-Pacific Region. The first such inter-regional workshop in 2004 at FAO-Rome identified the framework for ICM4ARD. The second workshop in 2005 at Cairo, Egypt came up with four themes or action areas under which the activities of ICM4ARD should be carried out, namely, advocacy, capacity building, content management (integration of information resources/systems) and governance.

In October 2005, an Expert Consultation at FAO-Rome brought together various initiatives on promoting ICT/M in ARD. The consultation recommended that a more structured global partnership was required to bring together the existing range of initiatives into a more cohesive alliance that would increase the chances of enhancing information management in agricultural science and technology. It was felt strongly that this partnership should not take the form of a new organization, but rather should be formulated as an initiative supported by an alliance that focus on clearly identified high priority issues.

The present workshop's objectives were to (1) identify the role of regional fora (RF) in the emerging global alliance through their Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS) and (2) develop collaborative activities of RAIS such as APARIS, AARINENA-RAIS, FARA-RAIS, InfoSys+, AgroWeb, CAC-RAIS, and FORAGRO-INFOTEC. The workshop was also considered an opportunity for the new AGRIS Task Force on Advocacy to discuss with RFs the future direction and actions. The workshop program (Annexure I) was attended by 21 participants (Annexure II) from various RFs, selected Asia-Pacific NARS, GFAR, FAO, and representatives from other international initiatives on ICM4ARD.

Inaugural Session

Dr. Jonathan Shaw, Director, AIT Extension welcomed the participants from various regional fora, NARS and international organizations to the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT). He remarked that AIT, as an APAARI member and a regional institute of technology, is delighted to organize this important workshop to further bring together one of the oldest technologies – i.e., agriculture – and one of the newest – i.e., information technology.

Mr. P. K. Saha, Senior APAARI Liaison Officer, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Executive Secretary and the APAARI Secretariat. He briefly commented on the significant contributions of APAARI in increasing the positive role of information and communication technologies/management (ICT/M) in agricultural research for development (ARD) through its Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS) initiative.

Dr. Ajit Maru, Senior Agricultural Research Officer of GFAR, through his workshop opening remarks, explained how the inter-regional cooperation for ICT/M in ARD has progressed since the first workshop in 2004 at FAO Rome and the second in 2005 at Cairo, Egypt. According to him, these workshops have been useful in clearly defining the themes of ICM4ARD, namely, advocacy, capacity development, content management (integration of information resources) and governance. He emphasized that collaborative activities are the need of the hour to ensure efficient resource utilization by GFAR and avoid duplication of efforts among the regional fora and NARS.

Dr. Stephen Rudgard, Chief of WAICENT Capacity Building and Outreach, FAO-Rome gave special remarks and informed the participants on the outcome of October 2005 Expert Consultation at FAO-Rome which endorsed the earlier identified themes of ICM4ARD and recommended a greater cooperation among various organizations and networks under a new initiative, tentatively called New AGRIS. He identified the urgent need for advocacy at various levels to promote and exploit the full potential of ICT/M in agricultural research for development.

Prof. Sudip Rakshit, AIT Vice President for Research, delivered the inaugural address on behalf of AIT President, who due to overseas travel could not be present. Prof. Rakshit welcomed the participants and remarked that AIT, as an institute of higher education and research, values its relationship with APAARI and other like-minded organizations present in the workshop. He introduced AIT's multi-disciplinary programs on water management, food safety and natural resource management, and reiterated AIT's full support to strengthening research in region through greater collaboration with APAARI and similar organizations.

Dr. Sahdev Singh, APARIS Coordinator presented vote of thanks to the senior administration of AIT, APAARI, GFAR, FAO, Regional Fora, Asia-Pacific NARS, and related international organizations for nominating their respective ICT/M officers for the workshop and continuous support to ICM4ARD in general and APARIS initiative in particular. He requested all participants to introduce themselves one by one so that a good group dynamics can be established to achieve the workshop objectives.

Session I: Regional Reports
Chairperson: Dr. Ajit Maru, GFAR

The first session was devoted to regional and NARS reports in which ICT/M Managers of various RFs and NARS presented the on-going activities and future plans.

Dr. Sahdev Singh outlined the APARIS themes, including capacity building, advocacy, integration of information resources and inter-regional cooperation through GFAR. He then elaborated the recent APARIS activities, including two training programs to enhance ICT/M capacity in 17 Asia-Pacific NARS, two important regional advocacy reports on status and success stories on ICT/M in ARD, and value additions in APARIS such as NARS databases and decentralized update of APARIS, and holding of the current workshop.

Dr. Keun-Seop Shim presented the highly successful customer-oriented approach of RDA's Agriculture Information Service for South Korean farmers. This technical information service delivered through DRA web site, SMS and e-mails provides support to 56,000 registered farmers through 8,000 agricultural researchers.

Dr. A.K. Jain from ICAR-India, Ms. Irene Okpul and Mr. Seniorl Anju from NARI-PNG, and Mr. Pisuth Paiboonrat from HAI-Thailand briefly described the NARS level activities to develop national agricultural information systems (NAIS). Common observations included lack of advocacy and human resources as main challenges.

Dr. Mohamed Sallam, AARINENA-RAIS steering committee chair, reported on ICT situation in AARINENA member countries and sub-regions, development of AARINENA web site, outputs from the previous ICT-RAIS steering committee, election of new ICT-RAIS

Steering Committee, identification of nodal points in member countries, and development of ICT-RAIS work plan for the next 3 years, including a bilingual agricultural information system called NARIMS.

Ms. Ilona Kononenko, representing CACAARI-RAIS, presented the newly developed CACAARI web site and the web-enabled directory of NARS institutes from 8 different countries of the region. She suggested CACAARI-RAIS could benefit greatly from the experiences of APARIS and other regional systems through inter-regional activities.

Ms. Myra Wopereispura from FARA described various aspects of the Regional Agricultural Information and Learning System (RAILS), which is being developed to act as an African platform to bring together the sub-regional agricultural information systems of ASARECA (RAIN), CORAF and SADC.

Mr. Emmanuel Picado gave an overview of FORAGRO's INFOTEC, a web-based agricultural information sharing system for FORAGRO stakeholders from all the different sectors which constitute the Forum. The system, which promotes participation of stakeholders through a platform that allows the remote inclusion of information by all registered users, focuses on science and technology related information. During 2006, INFOTEC is carrying out activities in capacity building of agricultural information managers through face-to-face training and e-learning, as well as in advocacy, gathering evidence through the selection of success stories and characterization of web enabled AIS in the Americas.

Dr. Ajit Maru, the Session Chair, concluded the session and raised certain issues for further consideration such as: (a) agricultural information systems becoming more thematic in nature, (b) private sector playing a bigger role in agricultural market information systems, (c) the resurgence of IT industry in general is being felt in the agriculture sector too, (d) on the question of "who pays for generating and disseminating agriculture related information", he said that this information was still regarded as a public good. The involvement of the private sector and considering it as a "Private Good" making the user pay has implications on agricultural information systems that need to be considered carefully especially in the South, and (e) the need for better institutional networking to create synergy among the public, private and NGO initiatives.

Session II: Global Strategies on Advocacy for ICT/ICM in ARD

Chairperson: Dr. Stephen Rudgard

The second session had five presentations on global strategies for and activities on ICM4ARD. Dr. Ajit Maru reviewed the progress of the ICM4ARD Global Partnership Program and EGFAR since the Cairo Inter-Regional Workshop. He elaborated on the evaluation of the ICM4ARD GPP and stated that the GPP evaluators had thought that ICM4ARD GPP was a GFAR service. He discussed the GFAR Communication Strategies in detail. A background paper, recently on the strategy was circulated to all the participants. The communications strategy proposes equitable and easy access to reliable, relevant and useful information for all its stakeholders and partners in an open, transparent and coherent manner. In addition, GFAR aims to serve as an example that leads towards greater coherence and integration of global, regional and national and thematic agricultural information systems and services. The strategy is based on a thorough analysis of information needs of various GFAR stakeholders and suitability of different media in providing information services. He requested all the Regional Organizations and stakeholder groups to comment on the strategy and take ownership of all GFAR communications.

Dr. Stephen Rudgard, Chief WAICENT Capacity Building and Outreach, FAO-Rome, presented the outcomes of Expert Consultation entitled “International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology - Review of Progress and Prospects” held from 19-21 October 2005 at FAO-Rome. The expert consultation brought together representatives of various international, regional, national and thematic initiatives to consider agricultural information professionals can work together more effectively to influence national and regional policy frameworks for better coherence in agricultural information systems at all levels. To follow up the recommendations of the expert consultation, three task forces, representing three themes of ICM4ARD – advocacy, capacity building, and content management – have been set up. Some regional fora such as APAARI have yet to nominate their ICT/M Coordinators for these task forces. To address the governance issue, the expert consultation suggested that a more structured global partnership is required to bring together the existing range of initiatives into a more cohesive alliance that would increase the chances of enhancing information management.

Mr. Joel Sor from CIRAD demonstrated the SIST (Scientific and Technical Information System), which supports the planning and development of information and communication systems for education and research institutions under a project from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. SIST provides a set of tools and applications for the users without maintaining a centralized database of scientific and technical information. Some of these tools and applications can be used by RAIS and other agricultural information systems that face the dilemma regarding the ownership of national databases and lack of adequate hardware/software resources to develop centralized databases.

Mr. Koen Beelen presented WISARD (Web based Information Services for Agricultural Research for Development), which allows both search and interactive functions. This system is quite popular based on number of hits its web site receives. The WISARD database maintains information on organizations, projects, experts, and outputs.

Ms. Abigail Mulhall explained R4D, a portal of DFID funded research projects throughout the world and their outcomes. The portal aims to enhance technology uptake at local level and create collaborative partnerships.

Session III: Task Force: Setting Up an Advocacy Agenda – GFAR and FAO

Dr. Ajit Maru briefly presented the outcomes of advocacy workshop at the AARINENA general assembly. The feedback from this advocacy exercise identified the needs of NARS leaders, senior managers and the policy makers, and included:

- (1) identification/creation of a vision for improved ICT/M at NARS level,
- (2) better information need assessment and feasibility of new ICT/M projects,
- (3) fundable proposals which can be proposed to the government, and
- (4) ICT/M skills development and investment in infrastructure.

Dr. Stephen Rudgard elaborated upon the New AGRIS vision to enhance the impact of science and technology on enhancing food security, rural livelihoods, and responsible use of natural resources. A synthesis of recent discussions on Advocacy for New AGRIS is given in Annexure III. It is envisioned that the outcome of New AGRIS would include:

- (1) stronger national information policies and strategies,
- (2) clear facts-based ICM plans and investments,
- (3) better information products and services, and
- (4) one “international” approach.

This was followed by a working group session and participants were divided into two groups to answer questions regarding the advocacy for ICM4ARD, such as what are we advocating, who are we advocating to, and what is the message? The synthesized outcomes of the two groups are as follows:

Advocacy Targets

It is important to recognize the need for and to develop distinct advocacy approaches for different parts of the heterogeneous institutional structure in NARS. At national level, the highest priority should be given to the NARI/NARO, and possibly to universities if they have a significant role in R&D. Second priority should be given to intermediaries such as rural service providers (public and private) and then farmers. The nature and significance of the various intermediary tiers will vary between NARS.

Justification for Advocacy

- There is insufficient investment in ICM by NARS.
- ICM resources (human and technological) in NARS are inadequate.
- There are very few ICM4ARD strategies in research institutes, which means that:
 - ICT/M or AIS is not seen as a priority in many institutions;
 - ICT/M is not seen as a tool to improve staff productivity.
- There is a need to improve alignment between ICM and organizations’ vision.

Prerequisites for Advocacy Activities

- SWOT analysis – especially opportunities and threats;
- Evidence in the form of concrete data; and
- Learning experiences.

Advocacy Message

Primary message:

Planning in NARS is essential for strong ICM – comprising vision, strategy, policy framework, operational plans, monitoring and evaluation – in order to address needs/demands of (internal and external) stakeholders and to use/build effectively ICM (human and technological) capacities.

Parallel message:

Lack of ICM planning means (i) outputs are not disseminated effectively, (ii) R&D resources are wasted, and (iii) the NARS public image is poor due to lack of credibility. In the extreme, this means NARS institutions are obsolete.

More specifically, the NARS leaders and senior managers should be sensitized for following:

- Ensure that information management is adequately considered at senior most levels e.g. management board.
- Invest in development of:
 - an analysis of information needs/demands of key stakeholders (especially farmers);
 - an ICM strategy for ARD, supported by a feasibility study;
 - institutional ICM policies;
 - ICM champion(s) – at organizational level, a core group within an organization, and key individuals;
 - monitoring and evaluation systems for ICM activities;
 - documenting experience in order to develop evidence to support good practice guidelines and/or case studies;
 - knowledge management (tacit knowledge - human component);
 - human networks, in ICM and in thematic agricultural areas;
 - appropriate (cost-effective) infrastructure and technology platforms;
- Improve collaboration with other NARS organizations, aiming to:
 - adopt international IM standards;
 - collaborate in digital content development;
 - adopt clear IP and access rights policy, particularly Open Access;
 - share expertise, especially for training and technical support;
 - collaborate on systems development.
- Build capacities for ICT/M at national and institute-level:
 - awareness of NARS management (team-building);
 - conceptual understanding and skills of information professionals;
 - skills in using web-based information systems for scientists and service providers;
 - ability to write fundable proposals to submit to sponsors.

Session IV: Working Groups

This session was conducted in two parts. In the first part, following the discussions on the nature and scope of the advocacy initiative, the working groups considered the content of a work plan for the Advocacy Task Force. The outputs of the groups were combined and presented in the Plenary Session for further discussion and finalization.

In the second part, Dr. Ajit Maru announced that GFAR is now inviting concept notes and work plans from the RFs for 2007 ICT/M activities under the themes advocacy, capacity development, integration of information resources (content management), and governance for consideration by the GFAR Program Committee. He suggested that there should be a consistency in the concept notes and they should essentially include Introduction, Activity Details, Program (Schedule), Expected Outputs, how the activity will be monitored and detailed Budget. The initial call is for kick-off funds in the range US\$20,000-30,000 per RF and the preference will be given to inter-regional activities. The deadline for submitting the proposal by the RFs is 31 August 2006. A general discussion took place to identify the inter-regional activities that promote ICT/M in ARD in all regions using synergies and sharing of expertise.

It was also suggested that RAIS Steering Committee of RFs need to expand representations from other stakeholders such as private sector, NGOs, farmers groups, *etc.* and NINPs need to be developed as NINU (National Information Nodal Units). Participants agreed that the concept of RAIS embodies more than a computer network or server or web site, it essentially is a community of practices facilitated by ICT/M Coordinators/Managers of regional fora (RF). With this new definition, APAARI will provide a ToR of RAIS before 30 September 2006. It was recognized that there will be areas of activity identified by the three Task Forces that should be addressed under the Inter-Regional Collaboration component. Some specific potential activities and recommendations emerged from general group discussion for finalization in the Plenary Session.

EGFAR Task Force Set Up

Participants discussed the draft document on EGFAR Task Force (Annexure IV), prepared by Dr. Ajit Maru and agreed to adopt it with minor modifications in the Task Force ToR and Composition. In this regard, the RFs were requested to immediately nominate their ICT/M Coordinators/Managers for the EGFAR task force and also for New AGRIS Task Forces on Advocacy and Capacity Development.

Plenary Session

Chairpersons: Dr. Stephen Rudgard and Dr. Ajit Maru

Participants discussed the group recommendations from previous session and endorsed them. There were two sets of recommendations, one for the New AGRIS Advocacy Task Force and the other for the Inter-regional Cooperation through GFAR as follows:

1. Recommendations for New AGRIS Advocacy Task Force

A. Preliminary activities

- Develop a community of practice amongst those involved in advocacy – to improve communication, to establish a common understanding and language, and to clarify responsibilities;
- Identify the (hierarchy of) stakeholders - in order to target advocacy:
 - policymakers/managers;
 - ICM professionals;
 - scientists/service providers;
- Develop a common understanding of what is meant by ICT/M – definitions of terms – illustrated by real examples;
- Instill ownership of advocacy programme in Task Force and RO stakeholders.

B. Build advocacy tools

- Obtain assistance from marketing and communication expert;
- Develop common advocacy strategy/plan that distinguishes different stakeholders / responsibilities / perspectives;
- Define a common set of clear short messages which is sufficiently broad at global level and which can be refined at regional/national level – packaged in appropriate media, to be supported by success stories (see below);
- Develop web site to exchange advocacy experiences at regional levels;
- Develop indicators for monitoring and evaluation of advocacy and ICM – learning from experience.

C. Collect evidence

- Develop Pro-forma for (i) case studies & success stories, and (ii) country reports (including indicators);
Action: GFAR (& Task Force)
- Document successes and failures at national/provincial level, through short- and long-term activities;
Action: ROs and NARS
- Design and implement national/provincial case studies, or research projects on ICM;
Action: ROs and NARS
- Develop country ICM reports and assemble them at regional level, with M&E functions and based on set of indicators, examining current state of the art of ICM usage and implementation in NARS (existing systems);
Action: ROs and NARS

D. Advocacy activities

- Initiate global promotional/publicity campaign on the need for advocacy
Action: Task Force
- Include agenda item on ICM in RO General Assemblies
Action: ROs
Action: GFAR (& Task Force) to develop a brief guideline advice note on how to structure agenda item – e.g. a trusted peer (senior NARS leader) as advocate; an internationally respected external advocate, a national ICM expert to present a case study (institutional issues & impact)
- Develop activities to increase awareness and buy-in of NARS managers and of ICM professionals, such as workshops on vision/strategy, site visits, and study tours
Action: NARS

2. Recommendations for Inter-regional Cooperation through GFAR:

- (a) As an inter-regional activity through GFAR, all RFs will contribute to a global directory of NARS/NARI before the end of 2007. Tools such as SIST and platforms such WISARD and InfoSys+ were identified as potential contributors in the process. Through RF, NARS should be requested to provide the data structures/dictionaries of their existing databases so that a global database can be automatically updated.
- (b) Agriculture Extension related web sites at regional and NARS level should be identified and linked from EGFAR and RF web sites.
- (c) A global ICM4ARD status report, similar to the one published by APAARI for Asia-Pacific region, should be developed for enhanced advocacy.
- (d) RFs need to promote decentralization of their RAIS using new tools such as *Wiki*, which allows decentralized data entry, editing and update.
- (e) GFAR will develop advocacy material for RF general assemblies.
- (f) APAARI and CACAARI suggested to organize a study tour of senior NARS leaders from selected member NARS of both RFs to RDA's Agriculture Information Service.
- (g) A global ICM4ARD success story compendium should be developed in addition to APAARI's working publication entitled "Selected Success Stories on Agricultural Information Systems.

Dr. Stephen Rudgard and Dr. Ajit Maru, Session Chairs, gave concluding remarks and urged a timely follow up of workshop recommendations and greater cooperation at global, regional and national levels. Dr. Betty del Rosario presented a vote of thanks to the participating organizations and their representatives, organizers and support staff from AIT and APAARI. The workshop was adjourned at 17:00 Hours 4th July 2006.

ANNEXURE I
Final Program

3 July, 2006 (Monday)

8:30-9:00 Registration

Inaugural Session

9:00-9:45

Welcome Remarks

Dr. Jonathan Shaw, Director, AIT Extension

Mr. P. K. Saha, APAARI

Opening Remarks

Dr. Ajit Maru, Agricultural Research Officer, GFAR

Special Remarks

Dr. Stephen Rudgard, FAO Rome

Inaugural Address

Prof. Sudip Rakshit, Vice President – Research, AIT

Vote of Thanks

Dr. Sahdev Singh, AIT Extension / APARIS Coordinator

09:45-10:30

Introductions, Group Photograph and Coffee Break

Session I: Regional Reports

Chairperson : Dr. Ajit Maru, GFAR

10:30-12:00

(15 minutes each)

APAARI – Dr. Sahdev Singh / Dr. Keun-Seop Shim

AARINENA – Dr. Mohammad Salaam

CACAARI – Ms. Ilona Kononenko

FARA – Ms. Myra Wopereispura

FORAGRO – Mr. Emmanuel Picado

INFOSYS⁺ – Mr. Marc Bernard / Mr. Henning Knipschild

12:00-13:30

Lunch Break

Session II: Global Strategies on Advocacy for ICT/ICM in ARD

Chairperson : Dr. Stephen Rudgard

13:30-13:50

EGFAR and GFAR Communication Strategies - Dr. Ajit Maru

13:50-14:10

New AGRIS Initiative – Dr. Stephen Rudgard

14:10-14:20

SIST -- Mr. Joel Sor

14:20-14:40

WISARD – Mr. Koen Beelen

14:40-15:00

DFID – Ms. Abigail Mulhall

15:00-15:30

Tea/Coffee Break

Session III: Task Force

15:30-17:00 Setting Up an Advocacy Agenda – GFAR and FAO

18:00 Reception Dinner Hosted by APAARI

4 July, 2006 (Tuesday)

Session IV: Working Groups

8:30-10:00 Part 1: Identifying Advocacy Task Force Program of Work

10:00-10:30 Coffee Break

10:30-12:00 Part 2: Inter-Regional Collaboration: Activities related to Advocacy,
Capacity Development, and Integration

12:00-13:30 Lunch Break

13:30-15:00 Part 2 (continued): Governance: EGFAR Task Force set up

15:00-15:30 Tea/Coffee Break

15:30-17:00 ***Plenary Session***

Chairpersons: Dr. Stephen Rudgard and Dr. Ajit Maru

Discussions on Outcomes of Working Groups

Synthesis of Recommendations

Concluding Remarks - Session Chair and Co-Chair

Vote of Thanks - Dr. Betty del Rosario

17:00 Adjournment

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Annexure III: Advocacy Task Force: Output of recent discussions on the overall framework of the New AGRIS initiative

A) Goal: to enhance the impact of science and technology on enhancing food security, rural livelihoods, and responsible use of natural resources.

B) Purpose: more effective information and communication management in support of agricultural research and development, based on mutual support and learning for the ultimate benefit of local stakeholders.

C) Outputs:

- stronger national information policies and strategies around information and communication management in agricultural research and development;
- clear facts-based ICM plans and investments at national and institutional levels;
- better information products and services delivered to local and national stakeholders by international/regional systems and services;
- one "international approach" with all key stakeholders.

D) Outcomes:

Contribution:

- strong local/national ICM systems, with appropriate ownership, that do not replace or reinvent actors/actions at the local level;
- effective contributions from regional and international systems to the exchange of information at national and local levels;

Collaboration:

- increased collaboration, mutual support and consistency (i.e. better coherence) between information and communication systems for ARD;
- reduced dilution of or competition between the individual actions of the various stakeholders;

Effectiveness:

- increased effectiveness of ICT-enabled agricultural information systems for the benefit of ARD;
- maximized returns on investments in ICM for all parties;

Motivation:

- strong incentives and visibility to collective actions and the synergies and benefits that can result from them;
- motivated organizations and people;

Learning:

- different actors convened and learning from each others' practice;
- countries/organizations provided with innovative and practical solutions to their problems;
- cases of good practice, and what also to avoid, build and disseminated.

ANNEXURE IV
DRAFT DOCUMENT ON
EGFAR Task Force

Introduction

The critical role of information sharing and exchange and communications among its various stakeholders is well recognised by GFAR. GFAR has various mechanisms to inform and communicate issues related to agricultural research for development (ARD). One of them is EGFAR which uses new ICTs, especially the Internet, for information and knowledge sharing and exchange and communications with all stakeholders to ARD and users of agricultural research information.

EGFAR has evolved significantly since its inception. The needs of its users have expanded and changed. New developments in ICTs influence its structure, function and capabilities. There has been an increase, both in numbers and groups of ARD stakeholders as also their gaining in strength to discuss and influence global ARD issues.

EGFAR also provides a model for further development of the Regional Forums electronic communications. EGFAR's webspace is designed to bring integration and further coherence in agricultural information and communication systems, especially at the regional agricultural information level and in the development of the GFAR ARD Web ring.

EGFAR now needs greater participatory involvement of GFAR stakeholders in its further development and in providing guidance to improve its functions and capacities in sharing and exchanging information and knowledge among GFAR stakeholders. During the Global.RAIS consultations and the two Inter-regional consultations that followed them as also the ICM4ARD GPP proposal, the setting up of an EGFAR Task Force to guide further development of EGFAR has been strongly recommended.

This document details the TOR and process of setting up of proposed EGFAR Task Force.

Draft Terms of Reference

- To liaise with other initiatives that are involved in advocating improvement and rapid progress in agricultural information systems at the global, regional and national level
- To advocate and guide development of ICT enabled agricultural information systems at global, regional and national levels as also among the various commodity, thematic and disciplinary ARD networks, global partnership programs and stakeholder groups through GFAR activities
- Support and promote the development and adoption of common standards, rules, norms etc. for sharing and exchange of agricultural information;
- Oversee the development and functioning of EGFAR, GFAR Document Repository, the Global.RAIS Web Ring and the GFAR Knowledge Network
- Collate information and publish the Global biannual state of ICT enabled Agricultural Information Systems

- Publish the quarterly electronic bulletin on ICT use and ICM in ARD;
- Coordinate the publication of articles on ICT applications and success stories in ARD;

Composition

The EGFAR Task Force will consist of:

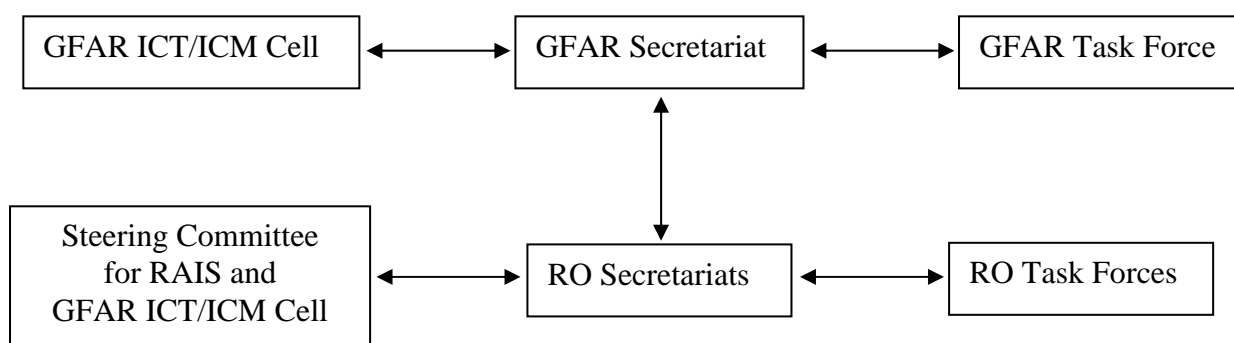
1. ICT/M Coordinators nominated from the Regional Forums
2. 1 representative nominated from FAO
3. 1 representative nominated from the CGIAR
4. 1 representative nominated by the CSO (including NGO and Farmers Organization) and Private Sector grouping of GFAR Stakeholders
5. Representative from the GFAR ICT Cell or of the Executive Secretary, GFAR who will also be the member-secretary of the Task Force

The Task Force will elect its Chairperson from its members. The term of the Chairperson term will normally be of three years. The representatives from the regional forum and the CSO and private sector groupings will also rotate every 3 years. The Task Force will provide its recommendations and suggestions related to its terms of reference to the Executive Secretary, GFAR who will execute and implement through appropriate mechanisms within the GFAR Secretariat such as the ICM4ARD GPP, after due consideration and concurrence of the Management Team, recommendations and suggestions of the EGFAR Task Force.

GFAR ICT/M Cell

The formation of the EGFAR Task Force requires the formation of the GFAR ICT/ICM Cell at the GFAR Secretariat. This cell will consist of a GFAR professional staff with experience in managing agricultural information and its communication through use of ICTs. This cell will be a part of the GFAR Secretariat to manage the regular operational and management aspects of the Task Force.

Figure 1: Governance structure



Procedures

1. The EGFAR Task Force will meet in full at least once a year, in conjunction with GFAR Annual meetings. The quorum for such meetings will be 3 members out of the 6 in the Task Force.

2. All other EGFAR Task Force business may be transacted, as appropriate, through electronic communication, with the support of the GFAR Secretariat.
3. To ensure transparency, the EGFAR Task Force will utilize the *eGFAR* web site to seek and share views with GFAR shareholders and stakeholders.
4. The EGFAR Task Force will submit a synthesized report containing its findings, comments, suggestions and recommendations for consideration of the GFAR Executive Secretary who will include it in full with the Executive Secretary's remarks in his report to the Steering Committee. Each such report will be posted on the *eGFAR* web site.
5. The comments, suggestions and recommendations offered by the EGFAR Task Force will not be binding for execution by the GFAR Executive Secretary without the concurrence of the Management Team.

Expected Outputs (examples)

1. Guidelines for further development of EGFAR by the GFAR ICT/ICM Cell.
2. Recommendations and Suggestions for specific GFAR activities related to improving information and communications management for ARD to be incorporated in the GFAR Secretariat's Annual Work Plan and GFAR Triennial Business Plan
3. Publication of Global biannual state of ICT enabled Agricultural Information Systems
4. Publication of the quarterly electronic bulletin on ICT use and ICM in ARD
5. Comments on Information and Communications Management and Knowledge Management related issues in the GFAR Secretariat's Annual Work Plan and GFAR Triennial Business Plan